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BOLSTER GROUND FORCE CAPABILITIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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May 12, 2016

ABSTRACT

In recent years, China has aggressively contested America's ability to project power in an area of global economic importance: the Western Pacific. Notable Chinese efforts in this region are the accelerated pace of China modernizing its People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), increasing its anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, and escalating activity to expand territory in the South China Sea. With the rise of China as a maritime power and its increasing A2/AD capabilities, this research paper examines how U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) can shape the theater and assure the U.S. and its allies maintain access to the global commons.

Bolstering USPACOM ground force capabilities in the Western Pacific provides a comprehensive solution to counter China's aggressive action threatening East Asian security, because it sets conditions favorable to U.S. national security interests, strengthens the regional security framework, and projects U.S. power in the region to deter China. This paper provides a detailed analysis of this operational approach by first framing the problem of China's aggression, then discussing how to strengthen ground force capabilities to deter China, and concluding with several recommendations for USPACOM.

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“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.” – Albert Einstein

INTRODUCTION

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1991, the United States emerged as the sole superpower on the global stage. This unipolar dominance for nearly three decades has allowed America to lead and highly influence the world to pursue enduring U.S. national interests. The strategic desired end-state of these interests is a rules-based international order that promotes global security and prosperity as well as respect for universal values of all people.¹ Essential to this endeavor is the U.S. Armed Forces’ critical capability of projecting and sustaining military power abroad on a large scale.²

In recent years, China has aggressively contested America’s ability to project power in an area of global economic importance: the Western Pacific. Notable Chinese efforts in this region are the accelerated pace of China modernizing its People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), increasing its anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, and escalating activity to expand territory in the South China Sea.³ With the rise of China as a maritime power and its increasing A2/AD capabilities, how does U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) shape the theater and assure the U.S. and its allies maintain access to the global commons?

Bolstering USPACOM ground force capabilities in the Western Pacific provides a comprehensive solution to counter China’s aggressive action threatening East Asian security, because it sets conditions favorable to U.S. national security interests, strengthens the regional security framework, and projects U.S. power in the region to deter China. The broader impact of this operational approach ultimately establishes a

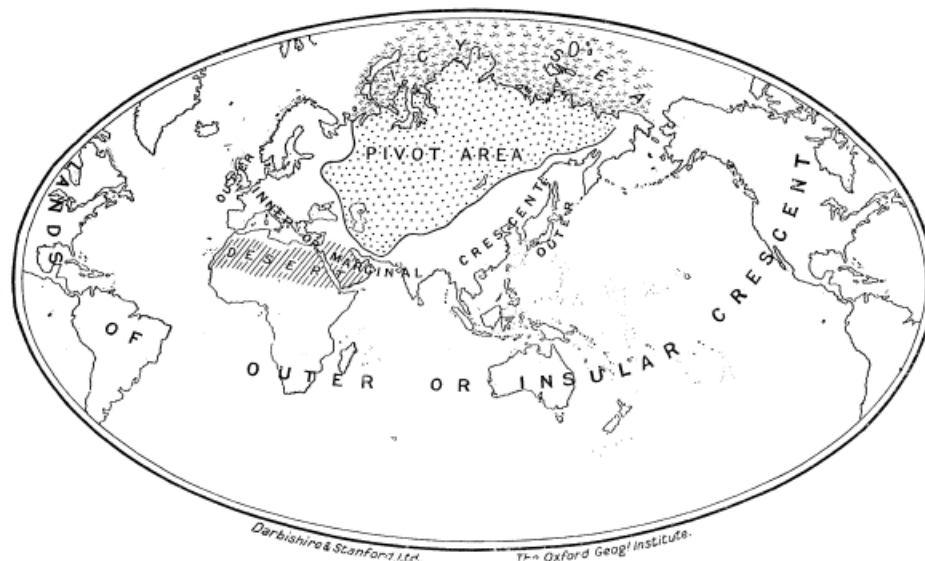
robust U.S. footprint in the Asia-Pacific region and directly supports the Joint Chiefs of Staff's strategic vision to assert the U.S. military's role in protecting the global commons.⁴ This paper provides a detailed analysis of this comprehensive solution to bolster ground force capabilities in the Western Pacific by first framing the problem of China's aggression and then dissecting the threat. Next, it provides a detailed discussion of how to strengthen ground force capabilities to deter China and examines several counterarguments. Finally, as derived from this analysis and discussion, it concludes with several recommendations for the USPACOM Commander.

BACKGROUND

In order to develop feasible solutions to the complex situation emerging in the Western Pacific, it is imperative to employ problem framing in an effort to better understand the critical factors driving China's aggression. The problem framing approach for this analysis begins with a geostrategic lens to facilitate interpretation of China's strategy, and then identify implications for United States' strategy adjustment.

The Geostrategic Context – Purpose Behind China's Strategy

The driving factors behind China's maritime strategy are influenced on a broad spectrum by its geostrategic location. Sir H.J. Mackinder defined different regions of the world based on their geopolitical advantages in his famous writings of the early twentieth century that still resonate today.⁵ As illustrated by Mackinder in Figure 1, China is located in the inner or marginal crescent region, which constitutes dual security interests: land and sea power.⁶ Further examination suggests that China's sea territory has three important strategic values. First, it provides a barrier for China's national security. As noted by Maj. Gen. Peng Guangqian, People's Liberation Army, the nation suffered from



THE NATURAL SEATS OF POWER.
Pivot area—wholly continental. Outer crescent—wholly oceanic. Inner crescent—partly continental, partly oceanic.

Figure 1: Sir H.J. Mackinder's "The Geographical Pivot of History"⁶

"470 invasions from sea, including seventy large-scale invasions" throughout Chinese modern history.⁷ These sea invasions far exceeded the number of land attacks by adversaries. Second, China's sea area provides strategic access to both the Pacific and Indian Oceans for critical international trade. China's seagoing freight is an essential requirement for its economic growth. Third, China's sea territory is a vast region of energy, mineral, and biological resources crucial for the nation's sustainment and development.⁸

These geostrategic factors are the forcing functions behind China's military strategy. China is clearly signaling a campaign of expanding interior security. A leading expert on China and professor of strategy at the U.S. Naval War College, Dr. James Holmes, stated "the Chinese have been very forthcoming with us about what their aims are. ... [T]hey want to set the terms of access to the waters and the skies they claim as their own."⁹ Further examination of the Chinese 2015 Military Strategy White Paper highlights three key intentions: 1) exploit this window of strategic opportunity, 2) modernize its forces with a significant maritime transformation, and 3) challenge the global maritime order.¹⁰ As stated by the Honorable Hideshi Tokuchi, Vice Minister for

International Affairs in the Japanese Ministry of Defense, China is “exploiting a power vacuum [in Asia] with a Cold War mindset. It is tilting the balance of power in its favor against weak neighbors.”¹¹ China is clearly launching an aggressive, offensive campaign to dominate the Asia-Pacific region.

Essentially, China is deepening its security by shaping three zones outward from its coastline. The first and second island chains shown in Figure 2 help depict China’s strategy.¹² The first zone is a region within the first island chain that China intends to directly control for home defense. The second zone is an area between the first and second island chain that China desires to influence by disrupting adversarial forces further from its coastal borders. The third zone is an area beyond the second island chain that China will shape with cyber and space warfare.¹³

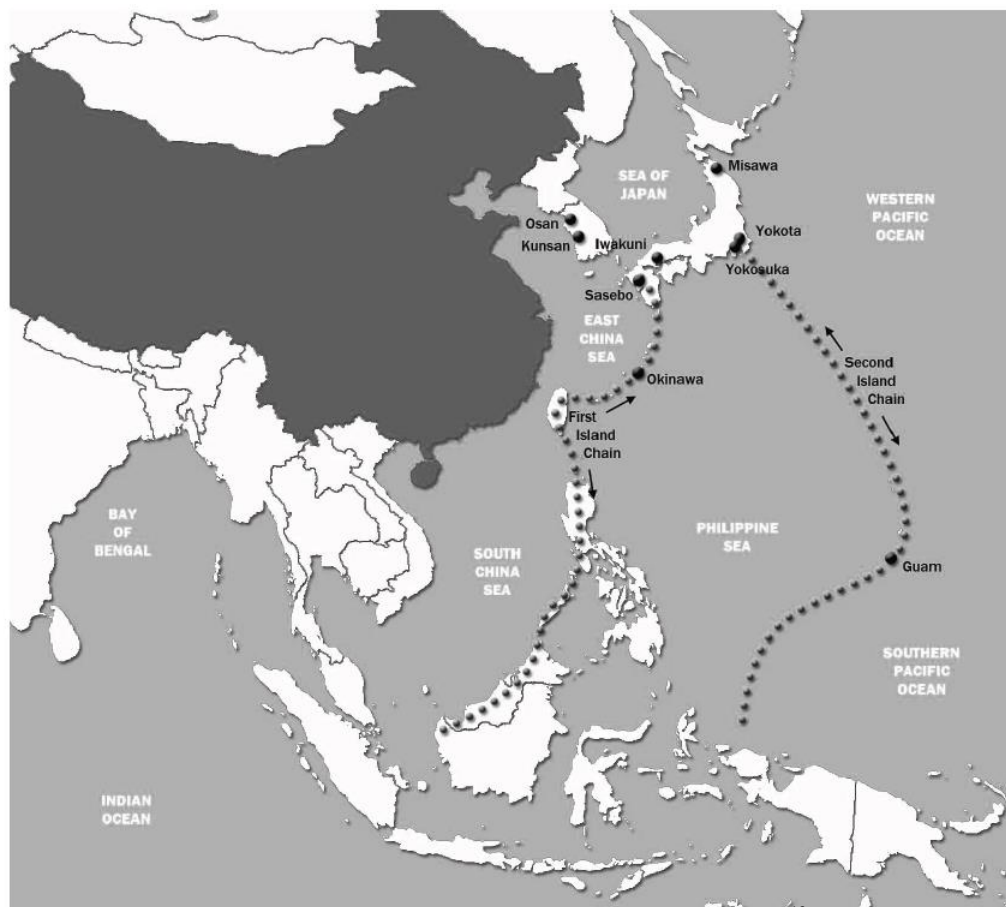


Figure 2: The First and Second Island Chains

Anti-Access / Area-Denial (A2/AD) – The Way Ahead for China’s Strategy

The prevailing global lessons learned from the Gulf War in 1990-91 and the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are two-fold: 1) U.S. forces are unbeatable in a conventional fight, and 2) adversaries opposed to U.S. interests will take an asymmetrical approach to offset America’s strength of overwhelming combat power.¹⁴ Chinese military leaders were close observers of these wars and their military doctrinal writings discuss how to defeat a superior adversary like America. China’s writings highlight the necessity to seize the initiative to gain an early advantage of a higher combat power ratio and prevent the U.S. from building up its superior forces in the conflict. Their writings also discuss raising the costs of conflict and pursuing limited strategic aims. China intends to set conditions in which “reversing the results of an initial offensive exceed the benefits of such a reversal.”¹⁵

Similar to what historian Conrad Crane wittily concluded, “There are two ways to fight the U.S. military – asymmetrically and stupid.”¹⁶ A critical capability for China to fight asymmetrically is with superior A2/AD capabilities. Although China does not specifically use the A2/AD term, it commonly employs the term *shashoujian*, or “assassin’s mace.”¹⁷ This mace was a hand weapon used in ancient times that could be easily concealed and then lethally employed with little warning. This principle is applied to East Asia where China is building tremendous capacity to surprise and cripple the U.S. with A2/AD weapons technology. China’s “assassin’s mace” fighting concept is designed to disrupt the concentration of U.S. maritime forces, hold their strike reach beyond the effective range to target China, and decisively defeat them once they come within range.¹⁸

China's growing A2/AD threat creates a significant problem for USPACOM to preserve access to the Western Pacific. These specific Chinese A2/AD capabilities constitute a calculated approach to asymmetrically counter the superior strength of the U.S. military and exploit the American vulnerability due to the immense distance from home territory. As of 2016, Chinese A2/AD capabilities consist of:

- Modernized naval forces (surface ships, attack submarines, and naval aviation) capable of attacking U.S. warships and commercial shipping vessels in far seas;
- Long-range anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs) and cruise missiles (ASCMs) capable of striking beyond the range of a U.S. warship's own sensors;
- Sophisticated naval mines to include moored, bottom, drifting, rocket-propelled, and intelligent mines that can counter minesweeping efforts;
- Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) designed for strike, surveillance, and reconnaissance with steadily increasing ranges;
- Long-range air defense systems with advanced technology to engage both high and low altitude U.S. aircraft; and
- Cyber warfare technologies able to degrade command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems.¹⁹

The implication of China's A2/AD capabilities makes it extremely costly for USPACOM to project combat power into a disputed theater in the Western Pacific. Specifically, the U.S. Air Force would be required to operate from a greater distance, disperse its operations, and increase its defenses. The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps would be obligated to meet these same requirements and also deal with an increased risk to carrier and amphibious operations. U.S. Army forces deployed to land by air or sea

would also face serious risks to their operations.²⁰ China's efforts in creating this elaborate A2/AD network makes it critical for USPACOM to radically alter the way it projects power in East Asia.

ANALYSIS

Although the U.S. military has experienced nearly three decades of technological superiority and domain dominance, China's accelerated military modernization is closing the gap and shall likely surpass the U.S. in certain A2/AD capabilities. New generation aviation strike platforms for the U.S. Navy and Air Force are increasingly costing billions of dollars, which forces the services to purchase fewer than desired. With years of expensive wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and significant DOD budget cuts, USPACOM must find innovative ways to gain military superiority with very limited resources.²¹

Research efforts have indicated that joint integration is a prospective solution to the growing A2/AD threat, because cross-domain assimilation can produce synergistic and cumulative effects.²² The joint staff later termed this concept as Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC),²³ and it is accomplished by a unified strike force with global reach "by creating a networked, integrated force that can attack-in-depth, leveraging access in one domain to provide it in another."²⁴

Bolstering ground force capabilities is essential for USPACOM to operationalize JAM-GC in the Western Pacific while maximizing limited resources. This operational concept directly attacks China's strategy of enhancing its A2/AD capabilities to expand territory in Asia. As Sun Tzu stated, "Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy."²⁵ Bolstered USPACOM ground force capabilities in the Western Pacific would facilitate America's ability to counter China's aggressive action

threatening East Asian security, because it sets conditions favorable to U.S. national security interests, strengthens the regional security framework, and projects U.S. power in the region to deter China.

Setting Conditions Favorable to U.S. National Security Interests

USPACOM ground forces, integrated with Asian allied and partner forces, can shape the operational environment and dissuade China's leaders from pursuing their objectives of expanding interior security. Since an arduous conventional deterrent cannot be built overnight, it is critical that U.S. military activities in 'Phase 0' are significant in order to send a strong signal to Beijing that it is not feasible for China to accomplish its goals by force. These shaping operations are best described by a concept developed by Professor Andrew Erickson of the U.S. Naval War College as Deterrence by Denial (DBD), which aims to "deny China the ability to seize and hold disputed territory."²⁶ Rather than playing into China's strategy of forcing the U.S. to spend excessively in an escalatory arms competition, DBD leverages current U.S. capabilities to enforce the territorial status quo instead of falling victim to China's strategic scheming.²⁷

The U.S. can best accomplish DBD by establishing what Dr. Andrew Krepinevich coined as an "Archipelagic Defense," which is a "series of linked defenses along the first island chain."²⁸ This operational approach integrates USPACOM ground forces with forces in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam to form a collective front. This integrated allied network tilts the combat power ratio in favor of the U.S. and its allies to counter China's aggressive actions. Ground forces would complement air and naval forces to deny China's ability to gain air superiority and sea control around the first island chain.²⁹ Effective combined action prevents China from

isolating the area within the first island chain and its ability to maintain control of disputed territories.

USPACOM ground forces can significantly contribute in three key areas along the first island chain to shape the operational environment with an Archipelagic Defense: air defense, coastal defense, and choke point control. First, ground forces have a unique ability to deny China access to airspace. USPACOM with partner nations from Taiwan, Malaysia, and Indonesia can employ highly mobile and short-range interceptor missiles. USPACOM with allied army units from Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand can operate longer-range air defense measures such as the vastly effective MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile (SAM) system.³⁰

Second, ground forces could provide artillery forces to conduct coastal defense. Although the U.S. Army discarded this capability after World War II, it is a unique mission that ground forces can accomplish to free up air and naval forces to focus on longer-range targeting. U.S., allied, and partner forces along the first island chain equipped with mobile anti-ship cruise missile systems could deny Chinese sea control to hold disputed territories.³¹

Third, ground forces also provide unique capabilities in the Archipelagic Defense to influence choke point control. As illustrated previously in Figure 2, there are key straits and narrow seas along the first island chain that connect the East China and South China Seas to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. These bodies of water can be controlled and influenced by strategically placed land forces.³² Although naval forces traditionally emplace and clear mines to control access in key areas, allied and partner ground forces could also lay mines with short-range rockets and helicopters to hinder Chinese naval

maneuver. Furthermore, nearby coastal anti-ship missile batteries could provide observation and fires on these minefields to harass PLAN mine countermeasure (MCM) operations and disrupt Chinese access to the open oceans if necessary.³³

Strengthening the Regional Security Framework

Integrated allied ground forces with strengthened capabilities would offset Chinese efforts to destabilize Asia's military balance of power. As pointedly concluded by the Honorable Hideshi Tokuchi, "The alliance cannot be strong without strong allies."³⁴ Increasing U.S. ground force presence in East Asia strengthens the alliance and regional security by improving readiness through coalition training, integrating allied battle networks, and positively influencing regional relationships with America.

USPACOM forces should increase bilateral and multilateral operational training exercises throughout the Asia-Pacific region to improve the capabilities and capacity of allies and partners. Specific bilateral training exercises, such as Yama Sakura with Japan and Talisman Sabre with Australia, could expand into larger multinational exercises to help build weaker nations' fighting capacity. A promising start for this concept is the Pacific Pathways exercise where U.S. Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) progress through a sequence of consecutive multinational exercises over a three-month training deployment to Asia.³⁵ Recent participants included nations throughout Asia such as South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Mongolia, Australia, and Japan. These innovative training exercises increase a BCT's time in the region with multiple partners, which improves the quality of partner training engagements and also creates new foreign partner demand to participate in future exercises.

The shift of USPACOM ground forces into the Western Pacific would help fortify ally and partner battle networks. Integrating communication, command, and firing systems among multiple nations presents challenges that can be worked through during peacetime training exercises. As noted by Dr. Krepinevich, one of America's greatest vulnerabilities against China is the U.S. battle network, which consists of the C4ISR systems used to direct and control maneuver, fires, force sustainment, and logistics. This network relies significantly on satellites that can be targeted and disrupted. However, establishing communication networks with partner forces utilizing buried fiber-optic cables and other hard-wired conduits can protect information flow between hardened command centers on the ground.³⁶

USPACOM engagements throughout Asia positively influence relationships and indirectly increase the likelihood that the U.S. military can access regional ports and airfields in the event of a kinetic conflict with China. Especially in countries with army-dominated militaries, the U.S. Army can leverage its bilateral relationships with other land forces to facilitate access agreements.³⁷ Leveraging two current programs within the U.S. Army can further enhance these relationships. The U.S. Army's Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program provides specific regional expertise that promotes military-political connections between nations. Also, the U.S. Army's civil-affairs units provide opportunities to engage in activities and operations that positively influence local populations.³⁸ These efforts paired with an increased U.S. ground force presence in Asia can substantially strengthen the allied regional security network that could ultimately counter China's exertions to expand territory.

Projecting U.S. Power in the Asia-Pacific Region

A bolstered USPACOM ground force presence with increased capabilities would project significant U.S. power in East Asia. This concept potentially achieves U.S. desired effects on the strategic, operational, and tactical level. Strategically, it could signal to Beijing that the U.S. is committed to regional peace and security, and it has viable military options to compel outcomes. Credible U.S. ground forces, integrated with allies and partners along the first island chain, communicate a unified assurance to counter Chinese aggression. Aligned with LTG H.R. McMaster's description of the Army Operating Concept, ready Army forces are exceptionally valuable in deterring China in waging a limited war to accomplish limited objectives, because "forward positioning of capable ground forces elevates the cost of aggression to a level that the aggressor is unwilling to pay."³⁹

At the operational level, a strengthened U.S. ground force posture along the first island chain would provide the ability to conduct offensive operations in Asia without a drastic force build-up, which was required in the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. American, allied, and partner forces operating along these islands provides a coalition force exterior lines of operations (LOOs). These exterior LOOs allow a coalition force to conduct multi-axis attacks against China, which creates multiple dilemmas for China to expose forces to defend assets at risk. Furthermore, U.S. Army capabilities enhance the Air Force and Navy in a joint fight. U.S. Army forces on the first island chain can suppress or destroy air and surface fighters, defeat littoral threats, and establish protected regional enclaves.⁴⁰

Tactically, the first island chain in East Asia provides USPACOM ‘unsinkable aircraft carriers’⁴¹ to project power against China. As China continues its efforts to develop A2/AD weapon systems that target U.S. carriers and other warships, USPACOM ground forces on these islands could provide a unique method to aid the U.S. Air Force and Navy in operations against the PLAN. The U.S. Army could support anti-submarine warfare (ASW) against China’s growing submarine force by emplacing sensors around the first island chain to detect PLAN submarines.⁴² Ground forces positioned at key chokepoints and narrow seas around the islands could deny China maritime superiority at these decisive points. With ground forces taking on a greater responsibility in this close fight, it frees up allied air and naval forces to perform longer-range surveillance and offensive actions. Additionally, in the event that China invades an American ally or partner, the U.S. Army could help launch unconventional operations with local forces to undercut Chinese efforts.⁴³

Foreseeable Fiscal and Geopolitical Challenges

Although bolstering ground force capabilities in the Western Pacific can provide a comprehensive solution to counter China’s aggressive actions, some analysts might argue this operational concept is not feasible due to fiscal and geopolitical realities.⁴⁴ With an immense and rising U.S. national debt along with marginal growth in America’s economy, the U.S. Federal Budget is forced to squeeze fiscal resources for the Department of Defense (DOD) over the next several years. The U.S. military is challenged to fulfill a multitude of missions across the world with declining resources. Specifically, in the U.S. Army, the budget is driving a downsizing of the force to 980,000. Within an Army of 980,000, it constitutes a Regular Army of 450,000, a

National Guard of 335,000, and an Army Reserve of 195,000. Based on the National Commission's Report on the Future of the Army, this force of 980,000 is the "minimally sufficient force to meet current and anticipated missions with an acceptable level of national risk."⁴⁵ With fiscal turmoil and a 25% force reduction in the Regular Army, pushing a larger ground force requirement in East Asia could exceed the U.S. Army's capacity.

Along with U.S. fiscal constraints, the Asia-Pacific region hosts a diverse range of geopolitical challenges. The wide range of cultures, languages, and national interests along the first island chain make it difficult to align partner interests with U.S. national objectives. Furthermore, it is complicated to guarantee the willingness of host nations to allow American forces in their territories. Dealing with a disparate set of regional allies and partners in order to build a unified coalition force and robust Archipelagic Defense will certainly prove challenging.⁴⁶

Despite fiscal and geopolitical hurdles, an immediate USPACOM commitment to this operational concept provides an advantage of time to develop solutions during peacetime. American forces can still achieve the desired effects despite budget and force constraints. One possibility is expanding the Reserve Component's role in multinational exercises and activities to prevent overtaxing Regular Army units. For example, the U.S. Army National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) could be increased in the Asia-Pacific region beyond its current seven partnerships to further build relationships and enhance cultural understanding among nations.⁴⁷ Also, integrating the U.S. Army Reserves into the Pacific Pathways Exercise for Annual Training can strengthen both U.S. Army and host nation capabilities. Focusing on bolstering the force competencies of

allies and partners can help minimize the total U.S. force size required in the Western Pacific.

Furthermore, U.S. ground forces do not necessarily need to play the same role in each host nation along the first island chain. Certain nations, like the Philippines, would require a larger U.S. ground force presence to create a formidable force there. However other nations, such as Japan or South Korea, already have significant ground forces to bear a greater portion of the overall defense network.⁴⁸ Host nation political concerns often inhibit permanent stationing of U.S. forces overseas, but periodic multinational exercises provide mutual benefit and also facilitate gaining access during a major crisis.⁴⁹ With creative solutions to maximize the effectiveness of USPACOM ground forces, the U.S. can circumvent the fiscal and geopolitical barriers in the Asia-Pacific region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Bolstering USPACOM ground force capabilities in the Western Pacific is a prospective solution to counter China's growing A2/AD threat. Ground forces have the ability to create synergistic effects between joint services, which is a key component to JAM-GC and deterring China from expanding territory. To further operationalize JAM-GC in East Asia, this paper offers the following recommendations to enhance USPACOM's power projection and role in the region.

1) JFLCC Authority to Command All Ground Forces: Designating USARPAC as the Joint Force Land Component Command (JFLCC) in 2015 for the Pacific Region provided the opportunity to assign I Corps as an operational-level headquarters in the regionally aligned forces concept.⁵⁰ To further enhance unity of command for ground forces to effectively shape, enable, and fight, it is important to empower the JFLCC

authority to command all ground forces to include joint service ground elements. This authority would synchronize ground efforts from each service to provide air and missile defense for U.S., allied, and partner assets at ports, airfields, and key transportation hubs. It would consolidate resources to provide theater-level logistics support and sustainment capabilities to the joint force. The JFLCC could potentially mobilize National Guard and Reserve units for 3-4 months to integrate those forces into multinational training exercises such as Pacific Pathways. Furthermore, it could leverage joint engineer capabilities to strengthen runways, harden or construct underground fuel storage facilities, build hardened aircraft shelters, and construct weapons sites in the Western Pacific.

2) Contest China's Expanding Security Strategy: It is important to recall the U.S. did not win the Cold War by conceding to Soviet Union threats or coercion. It defeated the Soviets "through a long-term, patient, [and] bipartisan effort to stand up to Soviet aggression around the world."⁵¹ This same mindset is the best approach for the U.S. to deal with China. American and allied forces must contest and accept friction with Chinese military and paramilitary actions. Accepting moderate friction is manageable, and it signals to Beijing that the U.S. and coalition forces will not retreat when China advances.⁵² Along these lines, strategic communication is key in avoiding miscalculation and unnecessary escalation of conflict. U.S. and allied operations will require careful management and clear communications to China to ensure coalition activity is understood as merely enforcing regional security.

3) Modernize Ground Force Capabilities and Apply Innovative Tactics: Ground forces are a key asset to countering A2/AD threats and modernizing Army capabilities

can largely benefit the joint fight. Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) artillery fires with longer ranges can attack or suppress enemy air defense sites. Modernizing the Army's premier forcible-entry airborne units with air-droppable light motorized capability would allow them to land farther away from A2/AD threats and still move quickly toward the objective. Empowering the U.S. Army again with its traditional coastal defense mission would allow it to leverage its Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) and High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HMARS) firepower to support anti-ship operations at key choke points along the first island chain. Lastly, additional weapon innovation for ground forces could be truck-mounted directed-energy systems to engage cruise missiles in order to defend critical bases, ports, and joint assets.⁵³

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As Sun Tzu observed, the pinnacle of military strategy is to subdue the enemy and win without fighting.⁵⁴ China appears to be applying this philosophy to its strategy of building a robust A2/AD network by accelerating the modernization and capabilities of its force. By increasing the U.S. costs to project power in the Asia-Pacific region, China intends to deter the U.S. from interfering with China's objectives to expand interior security and increase regional power.⁵⁵

The U.S. military must preserve access to the Western Pacific in order to counter China's aggressive escalation of activity and fulfill American defense obligations to allies in Asia. Overcoming Chinese A2/AD challenges will require a system of joint capabilities that provides a comprehensive and integrated force that can leverage access in one domain to enhance capabilities in another. As discussed in this paper, a critical aspect of this JAM-GC concept is bolstering ground force capabilities in the Western

Pacific, because it sets conditions favorable to U.S. national security interests, strengthens the regional security framework, and projects U.S. power in the region to deter China.

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